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ABSTRACT

To identify factors motivating African Americans to attend graduate or professional schools, questionnaires were mailed to nearly 1,600 African American journalism or mass communication students at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). A second objective was to determine locations and schools from which the University of South Carolina could recruit African Americans, and a third purpose was to determine the most effective channels for recruiting African American graduate students. Of the 397 respondents, 327 were undergraduate journalism or mass communication majors. In general, educational climate factors were not as important as considerations that bear directly on what a prospective graduate student must do to complete the program, the experiential opportunities the program will provide, and the expected costs and financial aid available. Approximately three in four students would be interested in going to schools other than their undergraduate alma maters, and nearly half would enroll in predominantly White institutions with large African American student populations. The main reason for choosing graduate school was self-actualization, with better pay and better career prospects also important. Implications for student recruitment are discussed. (Contains 10 references.) (SLD)

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Motivations for Enrollment in Graduate and Professional School
Among African American Students In HBCUs

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"No one alive has seen the Father of Rivers yawn this high or this wide. No one imagined the Mississippi or its relatives would take such liberties, consuming so many hamlets whole, or that, if they did, technology would be nearly helpless to stop them."

"He is all boy -- squirming in line, sliding down bannisters, shirt-tail out, shoes untied, dreaming of becoming a fireman so he can save people -- but his walk is the stiff slog of a worried father behind on the rent."

Isabel Wilkerson

Isabel Wilkerson is an extraordinarily gifted journalist, master of the narrative form, winner in 1994 of a Pulitzer Prize and Polk Award for distinguished feature writing on topics such as the Mississippi River flood and growing up a youngster in the Chicago slums.¹

One in a million! Imagine, a woman of color, working for The New York Times, make that Chicago bureau chief of perhaps the only world-class daily newspaper on the planet, the paper with 69 Pulitzer awards, more than any other newspaper.

More precisely, Isabel is one of only 5,600 daily newspaper journalists who are black, Hispanic, Asian-American or Native American working in America today, one of the 10.49 percent who are minorities. Chief Wilkerson is one of the 7.7 percent of minority daily newspaper journalists serving today as newsroom supervisors.²

In 1978 the American Society of Newspaper Editors set as a goal 30% minority representation in daily newspaper newsrooms by the year 2000.³ It is up from four percent in 1978 but the industry would need to increase the proportion of minority journalists by 23.5% each year for the next five years to reach this goal -- nobody thinks that's going to happen.

Unfortunately, the journalism schools aren't doing much better. Census taker, Professor

Lee Becker, whose school, Ohio State, has been tracking enrollment patterns since 1968, solemnly notes in his latest report⁴:

Journalism educators should find little satisfaction in the percentages of minority students enrolled in journalism and mass communication programs. Most of the minority students are at a very small number of schools. If the historically black institutions were not graduating black journalism and mass communication students, there would be rather few such graduates.

Fewer than half of the 413 journalism and mass communication programs report enrollment and graduation data by race. Becker and Kosicki project the proportion of undergraduates in journalism and mass communications programs earning bachelor's degrees in 1992 who are minorities as 15.2%. But the authors concede these estimates are most certainly optimistic since they are projections based on only those schools who disaggregated totals by race (though the largest known program awarding degrees to African Americans did not report data by race). The picture is likely much worse at most institutions not reporting data by race, they say.

Graduate enrollments in journalism and mass communications have been increasing at a more rapid rate than undergraduate enrollments and minority enrollments in doctoral programs have increased. In 1991-92, for example, while undergraduate journalism enrollments nationally increased by 2.1 percent to 124,284, graduate enrollments increased 8.8 percent (to 9,045) and enrollment in Ph.D. programs increased 39.1 percent to 997. Data for autumn 1992 though showed overall enrollments in journalism and mass communication programs down by 5.5%; undergraduate enrollment down 6.1% and graduate enrollments up 3.2%. While the proportion of students estimated to have received bachelor's degrees who are White has remained at about 85% since 1990, down to 82% in 1992, the proportion of enrolled students in bachelor's degree programs who are White has declined from 80.4% in 1990 to 72.9% in 1992 (foreign student enrollment has remained steady at about 1.1% to 1.6%). More encouraging is that an estimated 17.4% of the doctorates awarded in 1991 and 1992 went to African American students and about 13.5% of those students studying in doctoral programs in journalism and mass communication are African Americans.⁵ These estimates are based on Becker and Kosicki's assumption that the

proportion of students receiving degrees in 1991-92 from the one institution known to account for most of the degrees conferred on African Americans is equivalent to patterns reported earlier when the school chose to break enrollment data down by race; in 1991-92 this institution did not do that.⁶

According to The Chronicle of Higher Education 1993 Almanac, 19.3% of enrollment in public 4-year institutions and 17.7% of enrollment in private 4-year institutions is minority. 19.7% of the American population is minority. 20.3% of American adults hold at least a bachelor's degree and total enrollment in higher education is up 16.1% over the last 10 years.

Increased enrollments and faculty retirements are resulting in a critical shortage of faculty members in all disciplines. A 1992 survey of 102 journalism or mass communication administrators and 210 speech communication administrators indicates the need will be for 2,820 new professors by 1998.⁷ About 85% of the recruiting institutions indicate that they will require or prefer entry-level faculty with a Ph.D., thus the need for Ph.D's will be 2,400 but existing institutions are expected to produce only 1,200 Ph.D's. DeFleur explains⁸

The older concept of a glut of Ph.D.s has been dramatically reversed, and the nation is heading for an accelerating shortfall in the availability of entry-level faculty recruits who have the earned doctorate. The shortage will occur in virtually all academic fields, and the communications disciplines will be no exception. Indeed, it can be argued that those disciplines will be especially hard hit. Their rate of production of Ph.D.s. has been declining since the mid-1970s, and there is no reason to expect it to rise in the near future. In some areas of communications, such as journalism and mass communication, an even more severe shortage of Ph.D.s will be encountered. The rate of doctoral production in those areas is already much lower than for the communications disciplines as a whole, and the trend is downward. Even if enrollments in Ph.D. programs in journalism and mass communication doubled next year, it would not be possible to catch up with the curve of supply and demand as it develops between now and the end of the century. The upcoming problem can be summed up by noting that during the next five years, less than half of the schools, departments and programs seeking new communications Ph.D.s for entry-level positions on their faculty will be able to find them.

Research Objectives

With the financial support of the Houston Center for the Study of the Black Experience in Higher Education the authors set out to explore the motivations for enrollment in

graduate and professional school among African American students in HBCUs (historically black colleges and universities).

The Graduate and Professional School Enrollment Management Corporation (GAPSEMC)(Nashville) has identified several factors that motivate graduate students to select one school over another. The "student choice pyramid" for residential students is different from the pyramid for "local/commuting" students.

The GAPSEMC criteria were used as motivation measures. These choice "variables" are: Program of Study; Reputation of Program; Quality of Program; Location; Chances of Being Admitted; Cost and Financial Aid; Degree Requirements; Placement; Employment Opportunities for Student and Spouse; and Housing.

We identified "competitors" (institutions considered as likely choices of those students intending to pursue graduate or professional school beyond the bachelor's degree). We also identified sources of influence and information (academic advisers, promotional materials on bulletin boards, etc., advertisements in trade and academic journals).

Demographic measures, in addition to race, included marital status, age and employment status.

Our research objectives were to:

1. Identify factors motivating African Americans to attend graduate school or professional school.
2. Determine geographic locations and colleges/universities from which our own institution can recruit African Americans.
3. Determine most effective channels of communication for recruiting African Americans.

Methods

We contacted by telephone the administrators of each journalism and/or mass communication program listed in the 1993-94 Black College Communication Association membership directory, explained our research objectives and asked if they would be willing to

have juniors and seniors in their programs complete a survey questionnaire. We batch-mailed questionnaires in February-March 1994 to institutions who said they would participate. A total of 1,600 questionnaires were mailed to 17 HBCUs and 397 students completed questionnaires.

Table 1: Institutions in Sample, Number of Questionnaires Mailed and Returned

Institution	Number Mailed	Number Returned
Alabama State	100	35
Alcorn State (MS)	35	29
Clark Atlanta (GA)	75	
Florida A & M	200	
Grambling (LA)	125	94
Hampton Univ (VA)	110	75
Jackson State (MS)	75	
Lincoln Univ (MO)	160	
Morgan State (MD)	150	32
NC Central (NC)	15	7
Norfolk State (VA)	50	27
Prairie View A & M (TX)	60	
Rust College (MS)	40	30
Savannah St (GA)	65	
Southern Univ (LA)	150	11
Texas Southern	150	57
Winston-Salem St (NC)	50	
Count:	1610	397

We have called back schools who have not yet returned the questionnaires and anticipate returns

will reach 500 to 600. We are also mailing questionnaires to a random probability sample of 400 African American men and women who have taken the Graduate Record Exam this academic year and designated journalism/mass communication as "intended graduate major." We are using the Educational Testing Service's GRE Locater Services to reach these students.

Findings

Most of the respondents to the batch mailing are undergraduate journalism/mass communication students (327). 203 are seniors, 157 are juniors, 22 sophomores and three are first year students. 326 would pursue MA degrees, 18 doctorates, 14 law, 1 MBA, and 10 other degrees.

The main reasons for pursuing graduate school are: self-actualization (133), better pay (77), better career prospects (71), better job (31) and change career path (14). A large number of respondents would consider attending HBCUs: Howard (70), Clark Atlanta (32), Southern University (23), Grambling State (20) or Jackson State (18). Others would attend majority white institutions that are known to confer a large number of degrees to African Americans: University of Maryland (14), University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (11), University of Virginia at Charlottesville (8) and the University of South Carolina (4).⁹

We asked "What factors are important to African-American students as they choose a college for graduate study?" [1=Not Important - 4=Very Important]. We asked about these 26 factors:

Table 2: Factors Weighed in Deciding Which Graduate School to Attend

Factor	Mean	SDV	n	% Very Important
Specific Program of Study	3.55	0.58	368	60%
Ability to Pay	3.55	0.73	379	66%
Internship Opportunities	3.52	0.68	380	62%
Scholarships/Fellowships	3.51	0.66	380	58%
Other Financial Aid	3.51	0.77	380	65%
Quality of Program	3.45	0.65	380	53%
Chances of Being Admitted	3.37	0.76	379	52%

Employment Opportunities While in School	3.31	0.78	368	47%
Degree Requirements	3.29	0.80	380	47%
Specific Course of Study Offered by the School	3.28	0.78	366	45%
Placement Rate of Program's Graduates	3.26	0.71	370	40%
Graduate Assistantships	3.13	0.85	378	39%
What People Say About Program-Reputation	3.03	0.83	378	30%
Presence of Af Am Faculty in Program	3.01	0.85	367	32%
Availability of Off-Campus Housing	2.92	0.98	367	34%
Geographic Location of Program	2.92	0.87	379	28%
Prominence of Program's Graduates	2.92	0.80	369	23%
Visible African American student support system	2.91	0.88	367	28%
Number of African Americans to Finish Program	2.88	0.95	368	30%
Presence of Other African-American Students in Program	2.83	0.89	369	24%
Time It Takes African Americans to Finish Program	2.67	1.00	368	23%
Racial Makeup of Area	2.43	0.91	380	13%
On-Campus Housing Availability	2.36	1.11	367	20%
Social Life off Campus	2.31	0.95	366	12%
Social Life on Campus	2.28	0.96	368	12%
Employment Opportunities for Spouse/Sig Other	2.23	1.18	368	20%

The fact that African American identity factors don't get as a high a rating as other factors of no doubt utmost significance to all students regardless of race, might simply reflect that half of these students favor graduate school at HBCUs where they expect the climate to be favorable, and most of the other half prefer White institutions with a large Black student population, which might suggest to them a supportive environment.

We have found a few differences based on demographic characteristics. Women are more concerned than men about availability of scholarships/fellowships ($t=-2.02$, $df=377$, $p=.0443$), about the specific program of study ($t=-3.55$, $df=365$, $p=.0004$), and placement rate ($t=-2.40$, $df=367$, $p=.0170$). Men are more concerned about social life on campus ($t=3.22$, $df=366$, $p=.0014$). 238 of our respondents are women and 148 are men.

Single students are more concerned than married students about quality of social life on campus ($t=-4.91$, $df=19.9$, $p=.0001$) and off campus social life ($t=-2.99$, $df=363$, $p=.003$).

Single students are more concerned about availability of on-campus housing ($t=-2.04$, $df=364$, $p=.0425$) and employment opportunities while in school ($t=-2.62$, $df=365$, $p=.0091$). Single students makeup 95% of our sample (366); 5% (19) say they are married. Married students are older (27.63) than single students (22.17) ($t=3.03$, $df=18.4$, $p=.0072$).

We asked "Which of the following sources of information are/have been important in helping you decide on a school for graduate study?" (4=Very Important) to lowest (1=Not Important) Here are the results:

Table 3: Sources of Information Helping You Decide On A School for Graduate Study

Source	Mean	SDV	n	% Very Important
Professors in the Graduate Program	2.72	0.97	367	22%
Students in the Graduate Program	2.64	0.91	367	16%
Staff in the Graduate Program	2.58	0.93	359	15%
Undergraduate Teachers	2.47	0.95	369	14%
Undergraduate Academic Advisers	2.40	0.98	369	13%
Graduate Program's Alumni	2.38	0.99	367	14%
Bulletin Board Material	2.36	0.91	368	12%
Someone other than graduate program alumni, staff or current students	2.35	0.95	358	11%
Advertisements in Magazines	2.30	0.94	368	10%
Other Advertising	2.27	0.95	367	10%

Employed students, compared to students who are not working, say they depend more on the advice of teachers ($t=-3.05$, $df=364$, $p=.0024$), academic advisers ($t=-.286$, $df=364$, $p=.0045$) and posted materials on bulletin boards ($t=-1.97$, $df=374$, $p=.0496$) in deciding on where to attend graduate school. About one in four respondents (103) are working -- 7% full-time and 20% part-time.

We also looked at whether interest in attending a school other than where respondents were currently enrolled, an HBCU or predominately White institution is associated with different motive or source-influence patterns. We found very few. Students naming an institution different from where they are currently enrolled as a likely place to seek graduate education are more likely to say the prominence of graduates of that program is a more important factor in considering that school than do respondents who are likely to stay where they are ($t=-1.92$, $df=367$, $p=.0556$). On the

other hand, students who would prefer to stay where they are for graduate education are more likely to say academic advisers ($t=3.18$, $df=367$, $p=.0016$) and teachers ($t=1.90$, $df=367$, $p=.0579$) have influenced their choice. About three in four students (288 of 369) would be interested in getting their graduate education at a different school. These students are younger, average age 22.34 compared to 23.90 for students who intend to stay where they are ($t=1.95$, $df=110.1$, $p=.0542$).

The proportion of respondents interested in seeking graduate degrees from predominately African American institutions (HBCUs) (49.5%) versus predominately White institutions (50.5%) is evenly divided. However, those who plan to seek graduate degrees at White institutions prefer the ones with large Black enrollments. We find no statistically significant differences in motive or source-influence patterns here. Moreover, we find no significant differences when controlling for gender, marital status, employment status or age.

Discussion

The results of this study are only suggestive and not generalizable as we have at this juncture only sampled opinions of African American students at selected HBCUs. Our random probability sample of GRE takers will give us comparative data.

"Climate factors" are not as important as considerations that directly bear on what a prospective graduate student must do to complete the program, what experiential opportunities will be available while in graduate school (e.g., internships), what it will cost to attend school and what financial aid will be available.

Approximately three in four students would be interested in getting their graduate education at a different institution from where they'll earn the baccalaureate degree and half of them would enroll in predominately White institutions, mostly those that have a large number of African American students.

The professors, students and staff members at the institutions where prospective students

would likely attend graduate school are the people most influential in helping candidates make their choice. Next in importance are undergraduate teachers and academic advisers, followed by alumni of the graduate programs under consideration. Printed promotional materials are less influential. About 12% of the respondents said "bulletin board" material is "very important" and 31% said it is "important" in helping them decide on a school for graduate study. One in ten respondents said magazine advertising and other forms of advertising are "very important" and about one in three said advertising is "important" in helping them decide on a specific school.

Understanding what factors journalism and mass communication baccalaureate degree holders think have contributed to their on-the-job success may also help graduate program administrators and faculties target their market segments more precisely. Becker and his colleagues at Ohio State have analyzed sample survey data from questionnaires completed by 2,171 spring 1989 graduates of accredited and non-accredited journalism/mass communication programs. In the first stage of sampling the authors contacted 77 school administrators from 395 schools listed in Journalism and Mass Communication Directory or Journalism Career and Scholarship Guide, both 1989 editions. They asked for names and addresses of graduates who had finished between July 1, 1988 and June 30, 1989. They mailed 8,041 surveys in November-December 1989 and received 4,222 (a 52.5% return). In a recent article in Journalism Quarterly the authors report a series of regression analyses of a subset of this database, spring 1989 graduates' self-report reasons for success in finding work. By self-report, 71.3% of the students had at least one job offer upon completion of their studies; 52.5% had more than one definite job available; 70.9% of the graduates had found full-time work within six to eight months after graduation.

When success is defined as full or part-time work using communication skills, 59.0% were successful in seeking and finding work. When success is further defined as finding part-time or full-time work in the traditional areas of journalism and mass communication (with newspapers, wire services, radio, TV, public relations agencies and departments, advertising agencies and departments or book publishers) then 38.9% were successful in finding work.

The authors found the most significant predictors of finding work were professional internships and grades in college ($R^2=5.05\%$). When predicting finding work in traditional fields the best predictors were internships, undergraduate academic major with emphasis in print journalism or advertising, using placement service in J-school, job search strategies and grades ($R^2=11.91\%$). Having a degree from an accredited journalism/mass communication program was a significant predictor of finding a job and of salaries, but not benefits. From a base salary of \$14,381 used in the equation, women earn less by a factor of \$1,638, even after controlling for the effects of training, industry worked in, grade point average, and a whole host of other variables. So gender inequity in pay still exists. Race and gender had no effect on ability to get a job.¹⁰

One significant implication of these studies is that students returning to graduate school in journalism and mass communications are looking for financial assistance and internship opportunities. The main reasons for going to graduate school are self-actualization (41%), better pay (24%), better career prospects (22%), better job (10%) and change in career path (4%). African American students are as likely to select a predominately White school as they are an HBCU and they will make the choice of institution to attend primarily on the basis of the specific program of study offered, their ability to pay for it, internship and financial aid opportunities. To a lesser degree, prospective African American graduate students would also likely be attracted to institutions already known for accepting, graduating and placing other African American students. Institutions must promote their programs on the basis of these factors primarily by using faculty members, students and staff members as sources of information and influence.

NOTES

1. The New York Times, "The New York Times Congratulates Isabel Wilkerson, 1994 Pulitzer Prize Winner," *The New York Times*, 15 April 1994, A24.
2. William Glaberson, "Hiring of Minority Journalists Has Slowed, Survey Says," *The New York Times*, 15 April 1994, A18.
3. William Glaberson, "Hiring of Minority Journalists Has Slowed, Survey Says," *The New York Times*, 15 April 1994, A18.
4. Lee B. Becker and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Annual Census of Enrollment Records Fewer Undergrads," *Journalism Educator* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 64.
5. Lee B. Becker and Gerald M. Kosicki, "Annual Census of Enrollment Records Fewer Undergrads," *Journalism Educator* 48, no. 3 (Autumn 1993): 62-64.
6. The projections based on the 206 schools reporting data by race is about 10.9% of those estimated to have earned master's degrees are minorities and 2.8% of those believed to have earned doctorates are minorities.
7. Melvin L. DeFleur, "The Forthcoming Shortage of Communications Ph.D.s: Trends That Will Influence Recruiting," Working Paper, in *The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center Working Paper Series*, ed. Martha FitzSimon (New York: Columbia University: The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, May, 1993), 14-15.
8. Melvin L. DeFleur, "The Forthcoming Shortage of Communications Ph.D.s: Trends That Will Influence Recruiting," Working Paper, in *The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center Working Paper Series*, ed. Martha FitzSimon (New York: Columbia University: The Freedom Forum Media Studies Center, May, 1993), 23.
9. Black Issues in Higher Education, "Top 100 Degree Producers," *Black Issues In Higher Education*, 20 May 1993, 65.
10. Lee B. Becker, Gerald M. Kosicki, Engleman and K. Viswanath, "Finding Work and Getting Paid: Predictors of Success in the Mass Communications Market," *Journalism Quarterly* 70, no. 4 (Winter 1994): 919-33.